



THE CRAWFORD FUND
For a Food Secure World

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MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed: 26 August 2014

ELIMINATING HUNGER AND POVERTY: GOOD ECONOMICS AND THE RIGHT THING TO DO

Investing in development programs to eliminate hunger and malnutrition is the right thing to do, but it also makes good economic sense. This will be the key message of Dr Shenggen Fan, Director General of the renowned food policy think tank, the International Food Policy Research Institute, in his address to the Crawford Fund's annual food security conference titled "Ethics, Efficiency and Food Security: Feeding The 9 Billion, Well" being held in Parliament House, Canberra 26-28 August.

"Nearly 850 million people across the globe are hungry. More than two billion people suffer from deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals, the so called hidden hunger. Elimination of hunger and malnutrition should be equally central to reducing poverty - they are linked in a vicious cycle," says Dr Fan, who is Vice Chairman of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Food and Nutrition Security and this year received the Hunger Hero Award from the World Food Programme in recognition of his commitment to and leadership in fighting hunger worldwide.

"Eliminating hunger and malnutrition calls for efficient policies and practices from all stakeholders. It is the right thing to do, but is also good economics.

"Hunger and undernutrition cost the global economy USD\$1.4 to \$2.1 trillion per year—the equivalent of 2 to 3 percent of global GDP, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. As a result of overweight or obesity, the World Health Organization estimates that about 3.4 million adults die each year, accounting for 3.9 percent of years of life lost.

"The good news is that investments in eliminating hunger and malnutrition have high economic benefits. For instance, in India, research shows that every dollar spent on interventions to reduce stunting is estimated to generate about USD\$34 in economic returns, IFPRI study shows."

Dr Shenggen believes there are a number of solutions that need to be part of the post-2015 development agenda.

"Micronutrient supplementation, adolescent health and preconception nutrition, agriculture and food security programs and social safety nets will all help.

"Inefficient agricultural subsidies in many developed and developing countries promote overuse of natural resources and increase carbon emissions.

"Re-prioritization of limited resources towards high-return investments is needed to increase efficiency and eliminate hunger and malnutrition. However, the removal of such subsidies may cause food prices to increase with negative implications for poor producers and consumers. In this case, strong social safety nets have a key role to play," he says.



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Investments in agricultural technologies that produce more with less are also crucial, according to Dr Fan.

“Resource-efficient agricultural technologies and practices, which are normal practice in Australia, such as no-till farming, nitrogen-use efficiency, precision agriculture and drip irrigation help to get more nutrients with more efficient use of all inputs and natural resources.

“Distortionary trade policies, such as export bans initiated during the 2008 food crisis, lead to food price hikes and volatility, which hurt the poor and hinder the efficiency of agricultural markets. Governments need to focus on open, transparent and fair global trade to promote efficient allocation of resources and improves access to food. Australia, as an efficient producer, can play a critical role in feeding the world more efficiently, nutritiously and healthily” he concludes.

Other speakers will include:

- **Prof Catherine Bertini, World Food Prize winner** and former Executive Director, United Nations World Food Programme presenting the Sir John Crawford memorial address titled *“Effective, Efficient, Ethical Solution to Feeding 9 Billion: Invest in Women.”*
- **Ms Rachel Kyte, World Bank Group Vice President and Special Envoy for Climate Change** warning the world’s agriculture is under threat and we’ll face a food crisis, unless we chart a new course and seriously boost climate smart agriculture.
- **Dr Laurent Zessler, Director and Representative for UNFPA’s Pacific Office** addressing how food security and population growth are connected.
- **Dr Elizabeth Finkel, author and Chief Editor of Cosmos**, Australia’s popular science magazine, on whether modern technology, including GM, should be considered a saviour or threat.
- **Helen Szoke, Chief Executive, Oxfam Australia** highlighting food waste in wealthy and developing countries.

The Crawford Fund wishes to thank the supporters of this event including:

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